

MISSION OF SAINT JAMES, WASHINGTON TERRITORY.

JUNE 3, 1874.—Recommended to the Committee on Private Land-Claims and ordered to be printed.

Mr. PRATT, from the Committee on Private Land-Claims, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 1450.]

By an act of Congress approved August 14, 1848, organizing the Territory of Oregon, it was provided:

That the title to the land, not exceeding six hundred and forty acres, now occupied as missionary stations among the Indian tribes in said Territory, together with the improvements thereon, be confirmed and established in the several religious societies to which said missionary stations respectively belong.

In November, 1838, there was established at Vancouver, on the north bank of the Columbia River, in the then Territory of Oregon, a missionary station, which has ever since been known as the Mission of Saint James, and which has continued to exist as an active mission, from the time it was established in 1833, down to the present time.

At the time said mission was established, and until the 21st day of May, 1859, the land on which said mission was located was in the lawful possession of the Hudson Bay Company under treaty stipulations between the United States and Great Britain. But although entitled to the exclusive possession of the land, the Hudson Bay Company encouraged the establishment there of the mission in question, allowed it to occupy what land was necessary for its purposes, and contributed regularly to its support. The mission of Saint James being thus established and in active operation, and in the rightful occupancy of the land as a missionary station among the Indian tribes in the Territory of Oregon, prior to and at the time of the passage of the act of August 14, 1848, was clearly entitled to the benefit of the provision in said act above quoted.

In August, 1853, the Commissioner of the General Land-Office instructed the surveyor-general of Oregon Territory that the provision of the act of August 14, 1848, above quoted, "is understood to grant six hundred and forty acres to each separate and distinct missionary station referred to," and that "in order to comply with the terms of the grant under circumstances where the land now occupied, together with the improvements thereon, cannot be brought within the legal subdivisions without doing manifest injustice to the missionary stations, it will become necessary to cause to be made a special survey of a square mile, which shall include the land occupied with buildings and improvements in the center as nearly as may be."

After the expiration of the rights of the Hudson Bay Company to the land in question in 1859, the surveyor-general of Oregon proceeded, in accordance with the foregoing instructions, to make a survey and plat of a mile square, which included the buildings and improvements of Saint James Mission, and the object of the pending bill is to require the issuance of a patent to said mission for the land so surveyed and platted. It is the opinion of the committee that the mission of Saint James is entitled to six hundred and forty acres under the grant in the act aforesaid, and hence the committee recommend the passage of the bill herewith reported, with an amendment saving the rights of all adverse claimants.

Since the passage of the act of August 14, 1848, the United States established a military reservation upon a portion of the land embraced within the aforesaid survey and plat, and the committee recommend a further amendment, saving to the United States the right to remove from said premises any property, buildings, or other improvements it may have thereon.